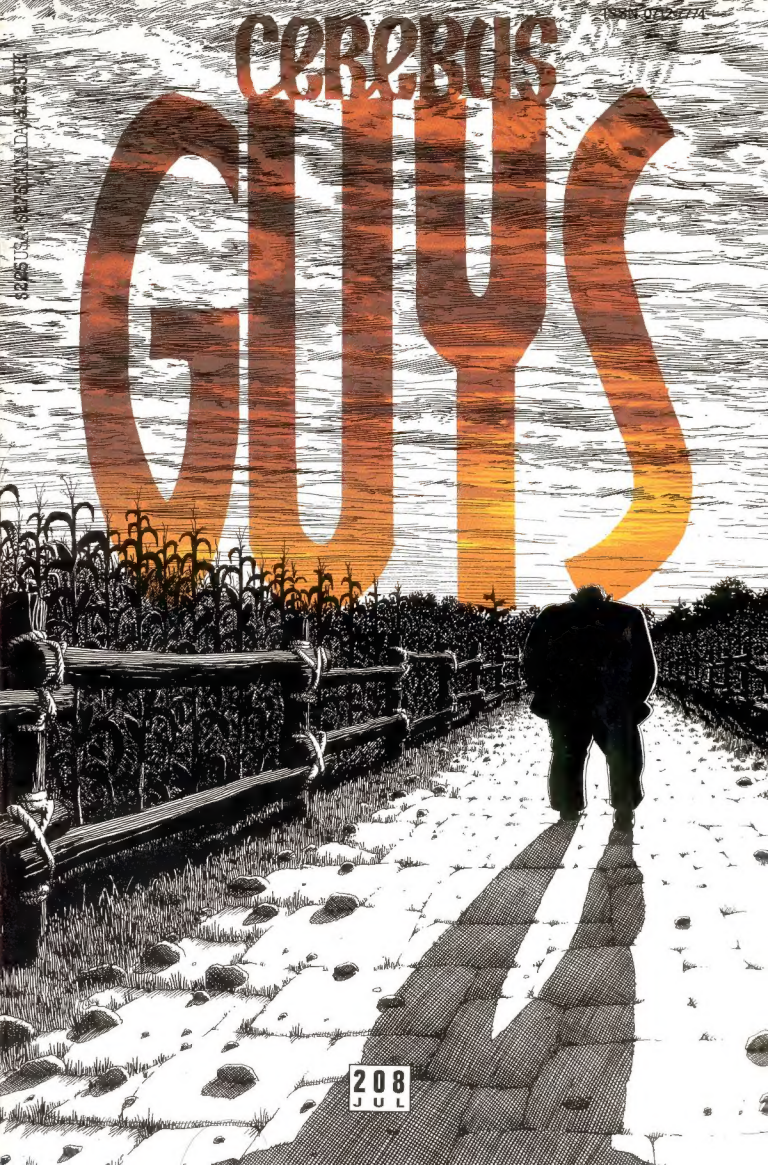
CEREBUS
GUTS
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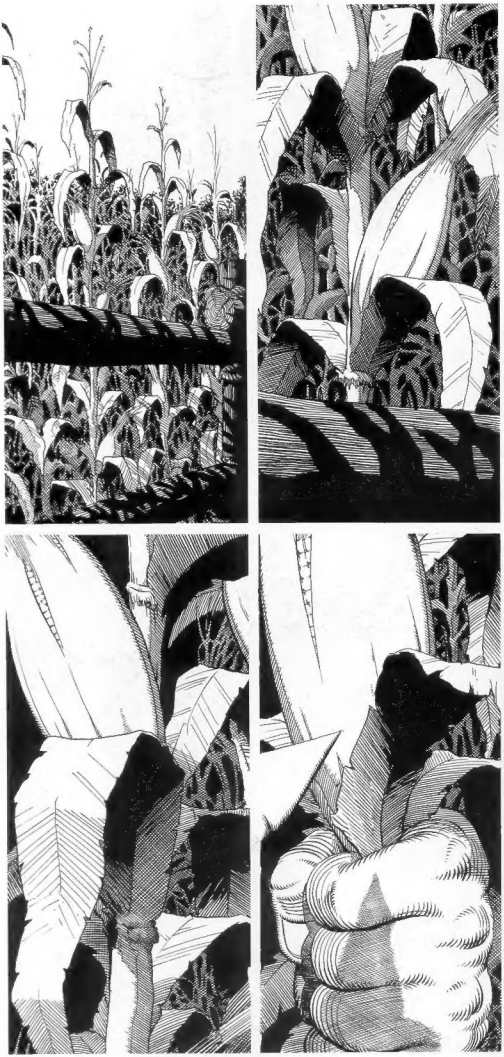

Cerebus

NO. 208 JULY 1996

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GUYS
a novel
•
(Cerebus 201 to Cerebus 219)

MONTHLY

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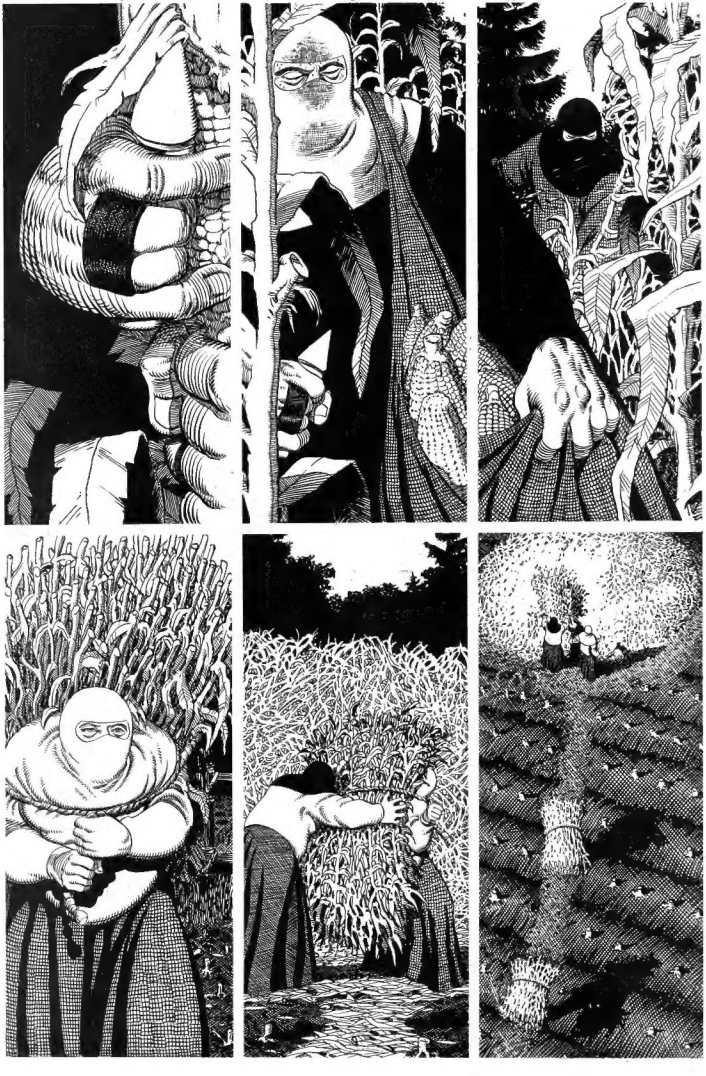
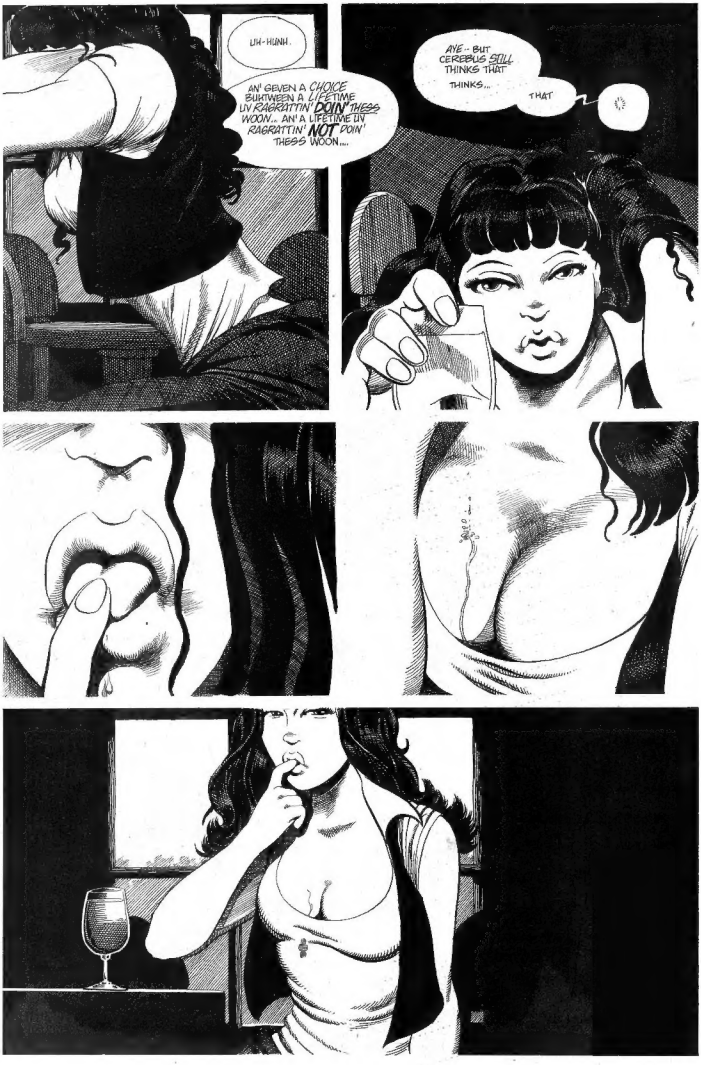


"WOOZ YOUR ADORABLE LITTLE FRIEND?
SHE SEZ
GET OUT
SERIOOSLY
WHAT DID YOU SAY?
I SAID "THAT'S ME PENIS -- Y'WANT T'KESS 'IM 'ALLO, THANE"
HA HA HAHA HA HA
NAW -- ATTYAGALL
HAHA
WHAT
I SEZ "I'M 2 THAT'S SARCROOS."
SO SHE SMILES -- AN' I MEAN ET WOOZ WOONA THAAT SMILES, AYE?
GET OUT!
CEREBUS DOESN'T BELIEVE YOU
SOO DOWNT.
WHAT DID YOU SAY?
I SAID "I THOUGHT YOU 'AD AN 'UZBUND?" AN SHE SEZ
"OW..... 'IM!"
"OW, HIM"?
YEAH, REAL NASTY-LIKE.
AT D YOU AY?

I DIDN'T SAY NOTHING
AN' THAN SHE ASKS ME-- "Y'THENK SARABOOS WOOD TAKE ME--Y'KNOW-- OOPSTAIHS FOOR A VEZIT?"
GET OUT! WHAT DID YOU SAY?
I SAID EFF YOU WOODENT I'D AVETA CHOOK YOU OUT
AN' SHE ASKS ME "WHY?"
AN I SAY BECOOZ THAT WOULD MEAN YOU WOOZ DEAD--AN' THEZ HA, TH RAGYUH,LAYGHUNS T'CONSIDUH.
(SHE THOT THAD WOOZ PRETTY FOONY)
'LIPSTAIRS' UPSTAIRS?
AYE.
YOU MEAN SHE WANTS TO...
THAT'S WHAT IT- WATTAYACALL MEANS ALL RIGHT.

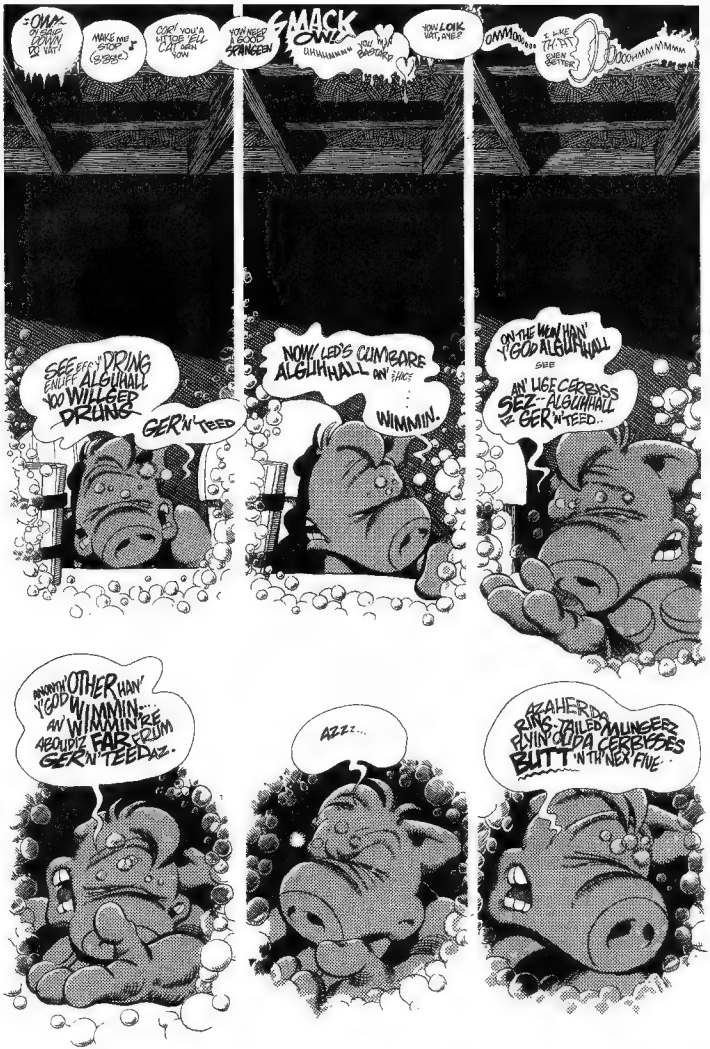
WAL? WOOT'A YOU WRITE'N FOR?
SHE'S MARRIED?
AYE. WOOT'S THAT GOT TO
WHAT ABOUT HER HUSBAND ...?
WOOT ABOWD "WOOT ABOWD" 'ER.....?
!
SCRAWK!
!!
IT'S HER CHOICE -- HER HUSBAND -- WATTAYACALL -- HASN'T GOT NOTHIN' TUH
HER HEAD'S TOO BIG -- ISN'T IT? DON'T YOU THINK HER
OH, AYE! TH' THING! THEN I THOT WHEN SHE CAME EN : "LEWK AT TH' SIZE UV TH' HEAD ON THAD WOON," I THOT.
AYE! AND IT'S NOT JUST HER HEAD, IT'S HER EYES, TOO
HER EYES ARE HUGE!
WELL IF THAT ISN'T A CASE OF WATTAYACALL -- THE POT CALLIN' TH' WATTAYACALL KETTLE "BLACK" I DON'T KNOW WHAT IS...
TUCK TUCK
IT'S THE "MARRIED" PART -- CERBERUS CAN'T WATTAYACALL -- DO IT WITH A MARRIED WOMAN...
WAL -- I KNOW WOTCHOO MEAN "BAYSIC YOOMAN MOORALITY WHICH SAPARATES OOS FROOM TH' BEASTS OOV TH' FIELD" (AN' ALL THAT)
STELL -- (EF ET WOOZ ME)
I'D FORCE MESELF
YEAH. ME TOO..
SEE...
TIME, THERERE LAVELS OV GRATTYFUHCATION FO' WHICH A LIFETIME UV RACKIT EZZA SNICKLE PRICE T'PAY...


UH-HUNH.
AN' GEVEN A CHOICE BUTTWEEN A LIFETIME UV RAGRATTIN' DOIN' THESS WOON... AN' A LIFETIME UV RAGRATTIN' NOT DOIN' THESS WOON...
AYE - BUT CEREBUS STILL THINKS THAT
THINKS...
THAT

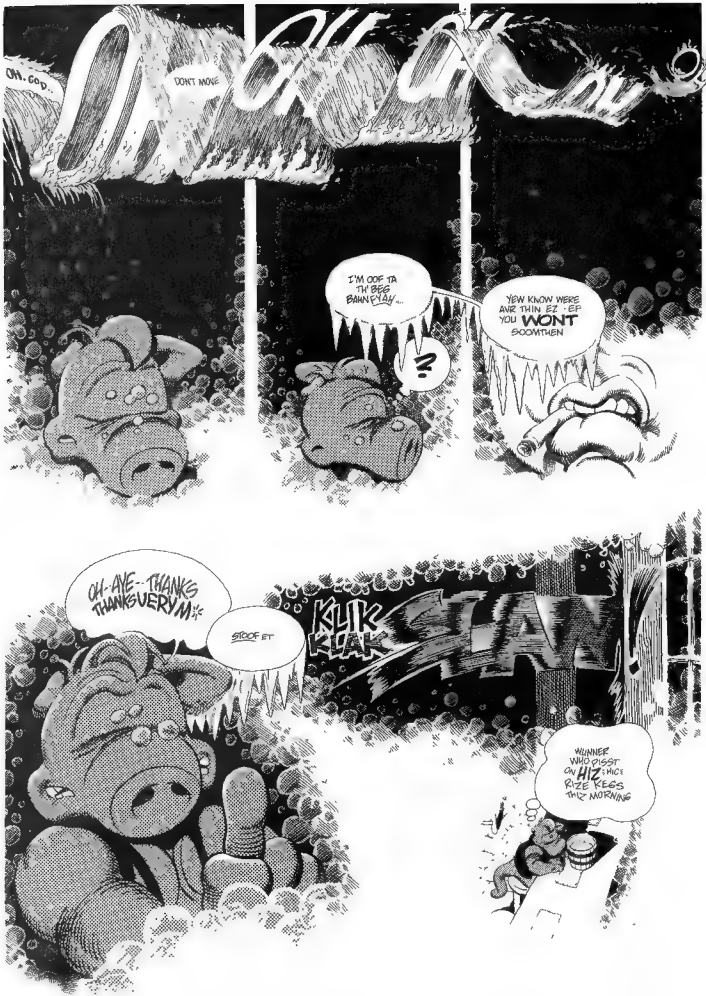
SCRAPE
IF CEREBUS ISN'T BACK DOWN BY MID-WINTER...
DON'T SEND OUT A SEARCH PARTY.
NO WATTYACALL PROBLEM.
KLIK KLAK
?
WELL HELLO THERE
HALLOW YSALF

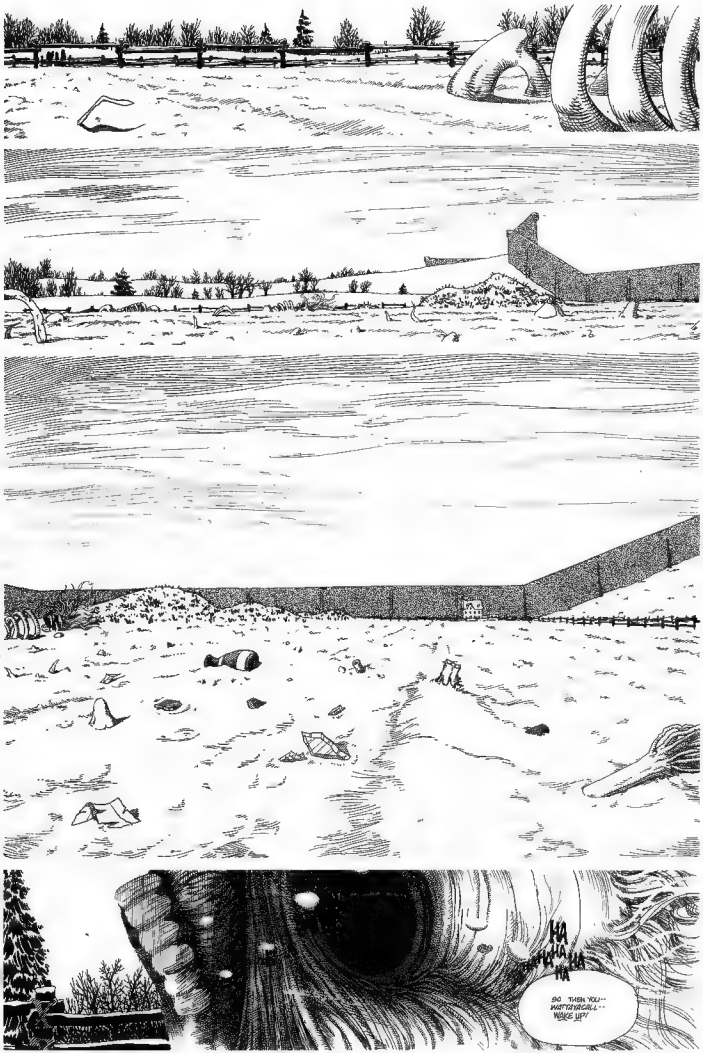
YOH DON'T REMEMBER ME...
DO YOU.
ZERE ENNY REASON OV SHOULD?
DOES THE NAME "RILLY"HOSE RING A BELL?
NOW.
CONCORDANCE EVE?
NOW.
FARROW HILL?
NOW.
BEHIND THE WOODSHED?
NOW.
SOW.
WHA' A YBW UP TOW T'DIE?
SKTCH SKTCH
WELLLL...
I KNOW WHAT I'D LIKE TO BE UP TO....
YEAH?

WHO'S THERE WHO'S THERE! WHO'S!
SKRCH SKRCH
YEH AWRIGHT
VIGS WHY.
HAHA HA HA HA HA
?
WOT'S TH' JOWK?
OH
NOTHING...


OMM... SHUD DOWN, EH, VAT?
MAKE ME STOP! (SISSY)
OOH! U'D ROB EL CAT WHEN NOW
YOM NEED A GOOD STANGEN
SMACK OWZ
UHHHHHHHH
YOU 'N' SHOTGUN
YOM LOIK VAT, ANE?
OMMMM...
S-LIKE THAT, SHEN BESTER
OOOHHMMMMMM
SEE EFF'N DRING ENUFF ALGUHALL YOO WILLGEP DRUNG
GER'N'TEED
NOW, LED'S CUMBARE ALGUHHALL AN' HICC
WIMMIN.
ON THE WEAN HAN' 'N' GOD ALGUHHALL SEE
AN' UGE CERBYSES SEZ... ALGUHHALL IZ GER'N'TEED..
ANORTH' OTHER HAN' 'N' GOD WIMMIN... AN' WIMMIN'RE ABOUDIE FAR RUM GER'N'TEEDAZ.
AZZZ...
AZAHERDS RUNS JAILED PLYIN' OLDA CERBYSSES BUTT 'N TH' NEX' FIVE..

OH! OH YESSS OH JUST ...OH THAT HARDER! UNH! OHGOD UNH UNH UNH GODGODGODGODGOD
?
HEV! WHEREDD 'E GO
'E LAFT
LEFD?
AYE
'E WOOZEN' CRAZY ABOUT YEW CAWLIN' 'IZ MUM A WRENKLED-OOP OWLD WHOO' (I. GASS)
A WHAAT?
NOT A WHUT-- A WHOO'
"DUBBA-HUE"
"HAITCH."
"OOO"
"AHH."
"EE"
AHFER CRINE OUT LOUD.
CERBIS, DIDDEN MEAN BEAR'S MUTHER IN PTICULAR IZ A HORE
CERBISS WUZ TALKIN'.
YOU MYSON, JENRILLY. IT COULDA BIN ANYBIDDY'S MUTHER. CERBISS WUZ TALKIN' ABOUD... IS COULDA BIN YORE MUTHER FER CRYIN' OUD LOUD.

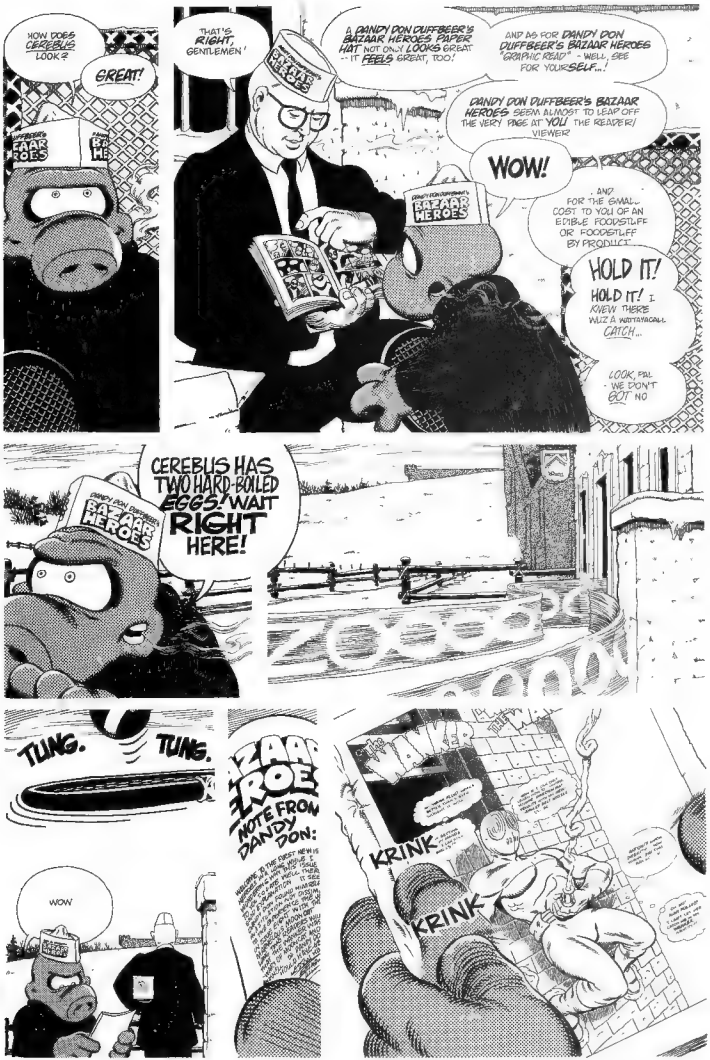

OH. GOD..
DON'T MOVE
I'M OOF TA TH' BEG BAWNEYAW...
?
YEW KNOW WERE AVIR THIN EZ -EF YOU WONT SOOMTHEN
OH-AYE... THANKS THANKSVERYM
STOOF ET
KLIK KLAK
SLAM
WUNNER WHO GISST ON HIZ HICK RIZE KESS 'MIZ MORNING


HA HA HA HA
SO THEN YOU-- WHITEHEAD-- WERE HIM!

AN' MARTIN'S GOT YOU WATTAYACALLIT-- TIED UP HAND 'N' FOOT AN' HAHAHA-- AND YOU START SCREEAMING!
HAHA HA HA KOFF KOFF
SO YOU'RE WATTAYACALL-- SCREEAMING "GET OFF OF CEREBUS" "WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!" "GET OUT OF THERE!"
AN' AN'-- MARTIN'S PATTING YOU ON THE HEAD AN' WATTAYACALL-- GOING (LIKE):
HAHA
PLEASE BE CALM, "FUSS-PUSS"
IT'S AH-- RIGHT. "PECKERFACE." I AM A TRAINED PROFESSIONOE!
JUST RELAX AND THIS WON'T HURT A BIT, "QUEERBAIT."
HAHAHA
HA
HAHA

HAHA
HA
TUNG!
WOK
FIVE SHOTS.
BIP
BIP
BIP
WATTAYAGALL..
FOUR GOALS
YOU PRICK BASTARD!
WHAAT? YOU FORGET TO... WATTAYAGALL.... SAY "TIME OUT" AND I'M...
EXCUSE ME
DANDY DA
BRAAAA
THE ROE

I'M DANDY DON DUFFBEER OF DANDY DON DUFFBEER'S BAZAAR HEROES AND I WAS WONDERING IF I MIGHT HAVE A FEW MOMENTS OF YOUR VALUABLE LEISURE TIME TO INTRODUCE YOU TO THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF DANDY DON DUFFBEER'S BAZAAR HEROES...?
UH...
"THANK YOU" AS A TOKEN OF MY APPRECIATION, PLEASE ACCEPT THESE DANDY DON DUFFBEER'S BAZAAR HEROES PAPER HATS (WHICH ARE IDENTICAL TO THE ONE I, MYSELF, AM WEARING) AS MY GIFT TO YOU -- AND WHICH YOU MAY KEEP WITHOUT ANY COST OR OBLIGATION
IF YOU'RE LIKE ME, YOU'VE OFTEN WONDERED," WHY IS IT THAT MAGS ALWAYS HAVE PICTURES ON ONE PAGE AND WORDS ON THE OTHER?" WELL, WE HERE AT DANDY DON DUFFBEER'S BAZAAR HEROES AREN'T JUST WONDERING ABOUT IT -- WE'RE DOING SOMETHING ABOUT IT! "AND WHAT IS THAT?" YOU MIGHT WELL ASK...
JUST THIS: WE'RE PUTTING WORDS AND PICTURES TOGETHER ON EACH AND EVERY PAGE OF DANDY DON DUFFBEER'S BAZAAR HEROES, EFFECTIVELY DOUBLING YOUR READING ENJOYMENT WITH EACH ISSUE. SOUNDS GREAT, DOESN'T IT? ... NOW...
PLEASE TAKE A MOMENT TO PUT ON YOUR DANDY DON DUFFBEER'S BAZAAR HEROES PAPER HAT WHILE I...
UH -- I NEVER TAKE OFF MY WHITEWALL HELMET.
NOT A PROBLEM, SIR. THANKS TO DANDY DON DUFFBEER'S NEW AND IMPROVED EXPAND-O-BAND YOUR PAPER HAT CAN BE EXPANDED TO ACCOMODATE YOUR HEAD AND HELMET!
TAP TAP
BAZA HEROE
EACH PAPER HAT, LIKE EACH ISSUE OF DANDY DON DUFFBEER'S BAZAAR HEROES, IS MADE TO EXACTING SPECIFICATIONS AND QUALITY-TESTED AT EACH STAGE OF PRODUCTION.
HOW DO I WHITEWALL LOOK?
GREAT!
DANDY DON'S
BAZAAR HEROES


HOW DOES CEREBUS LOOK?
GREAT!
THAT'S RIGHT, GENTLEMEN!
A DANDY DON DUFFBEER'S BAZAAR HEROES PAPER HAT NOT ONLY LOOKS GREAT -- IT FEELS GREAT, TOO!
AND AS FOR DANDY DON DUFFBEER'S BAZAAR HEROES "GRAPHIC RELIEF" - WELL, SEE FOR YOURSELF...!
DANDY DON DUFFBEER'S BAZAAR HEROES SEEMS ALMOST TO LEAP OFF THE VERY PAGE AT YOU! THE READER! VIEWER!
WOW!
AND FOR THE SMALL COST TO YOU OF AN EDIBLE FOODSTUFF OR FOODSTUFF BY PRODUCT...
HOLD IT!
HOLD IT! I KNEW THERE WUZ A MARTYAGAL CATCH...
LOOK, PAL - WE DON'T GOT NO
CEREBUS HAS TWO HARD-BOILED EGGS! WAIT RIGHT HERE!
TUNG.
TUNG.
WOW
NOTE FROM DANDY DON:
KRINK
KRINK

The WANKER
"WHEN WAKES THE WANKER!"
MY WANK FLUID WORKS BETTER THAN I EVER THOUGHT IT WOULD!
JUST BY GETTING SOME ON MY HANDS AND FEET I CAN STICK TO WALLS!!!
NOW IF I CAN ONLY LEARN HOW TO CONTROL VOLUME, DIRECTION AND VELOCITY WITH MY NEW-FANGLED BELT NOZZLE, I'LL BE...
OKAY.. IT'S YOUR VARTBYA CALL IT SHOT.
ANTON!? ANTON DREK?!? -- NOW WHERE DID THAT BOY GO...?
CEREBUS!
OH, NO! AUNT POLLY!!! I CAN'T LET HER CATCH ME IN MY WANKER IDENTITY!!

great scott! it's

AARDVARK COMMENT

Dear Dave:

Ha! I got it! I can't BELIEVE no one else got it! Wait, wait, let me start over . . . There are three reasons why I'm writing this letter:

1. I haven't written in over two years ('years' or Years!). Sorry.

2. 200 just came out, and I finally caught back up.

3. I need to YELL AT EVERYONE. Forgive me this self-serving, pedantic outburst, but this shit desperately NEEDS to be said.

Okay, I'm climbing up on the soapbox in the hollow halls. "Hello! Excuse Me! Can I have everyone's attention, please? (Is this thing on?)"

I would like to return to the issue of #186 (groans, eyes rolling, teeth gnashing) and posit the hypothesis that the entire controversy is a GIANT FUCKING HOAX! I'll stand by this, too. (Don't stand too close, man; it hasn't been FED in a while!)

Ahem. Let me direct your attention to issue #177. It is the third issue of *Reads*, and within the prose section we are treated to a description of the character Victor Reid's alter ego "Rotsieve," or "the anti-Victor." I quote: "Rotsieve...was capable of dictating...a definitive tract on misogyny without taking a breath." Go back and read it!

Nine issues later, we are subjected to just such a tract by a narrator called "Viktor Davis," who everyone assumes is Dave Sim's 'voice' in the story. This is a false assumption. Just three issues earlier, 'Viktor' played a cruel prank on the entire readership! He can't be trusted!

Some of you see where I'm going. For the rest, wipe the drool off your chin, and I'll make it very simple.

"Viktor Davis" is the "Anti-Dave Sim." The entire *Reads* diatribe is Dave's inner demons being exorcised for all to watch. Come ON, people, it's right in fucking front of you! He doesn't FEEL that way; it's just something he occasionally THINKS! On a different day, it's possible Dave THINKS that women are the sole purpose of living (well, maybe not, but you get my point). Read all of the follow-up in the later issues, Read the letters. Dave defends the story without once claiming that Viktor and he are the same person. Viktor is a creative extension of Dave's "dark side." Or, to put it in *Cerebus* terms: It was famous the wiseguy Evil Twin, Viktor Davis, who was speaking at you, "Sewage, Sewage,Sewage!"

I offer as proof that it was Dave and NOT "Viktor" who spoke to Cerebus throughout *Minds*. Nice work, Dave. Bravo. Not too many people are courageous enough to expose their darkest, meanest thoughts in a public forum. To then play devil's advocate about such "controversial" thoughts on such a large scale, with almost no possible reward, is either completely brilliant or totally nuts. Regardless, I take my hat off to you.

There, I'm done. Send me my fucking no-prize. Sorry it's so late, but I just read *Reads* for the first time this week. Lemme 'splain...

Dave, about that two-year gap. Heh, well, I guess I sort of drifted away from the book. In a (very small) nutshell: One year in L.A., then almost two years in Sacramento (where I got interested in other things), and the last eight months here in Oakland. With no current social life whatsoever, I had plenty of time to sit down with the complete *Mothers & Daughters*. So I unpacked all of my issues and reread the whole thing. And there you have it. This, coupled with the multiple postscripts after my signature, and I have thus fulfilled the mandatory 'Aardvark Comment Rules of Content' for this letter. Sorry, no pathetic broken heart to moan about, and I wasn't listening to any music. Back to the summation of *Mothers & Daughters*.

(Footnote to be filed under the Department of "seemed like a good idea at the time." Fifty issues of *Cerebus*, a Five-Pound Bag of Tortilla Chips, and a Quart of Extra Hot and Spicy Salsa. It SEEMED Like A Good Idea At The Time!)

Man, I hated you for a brief moment after #183. I had barely skimmed #200, and, again, I had never read the text pieces of *Reads* before. When I read that bit about it being the last issue, I must have made a really weird, loud, strangling noise, because Nadine came out of the bedroom to ask if I was okay. She found me on the floor, digging through the pile for issue 200 (Salsa Fucking EVERYWHERE), mumbling, "No, no, it COULDN'T be. Oh, my god . . . EPILOGUE?!" To make a short story shorter, you really had me going for about five minutes. Good one, man. I was totally freaked out. It wasn't pleasant. Or rather, I should say, "Viktor" really had me going. Right? It's nice to be back, Dave. Did you miss me? That's okay, I missed you too.

Currently Cleaning the Carpet,

Brian Zatkow
5410 Broadway #209
Oakland, CA 94618

P.S. - Joel Peabody! Where the hell are you? "Magic, the Gathering" is a fun game, but it's not THAT fun.

P.P.S. - *Minds* is the best novel yet. Loved every second of it.

P.P.P.S. - If I don't mention my friend Ross Rojek and plug his store "Beyond the Pale" in Sacramento, I'll end up in an unmarked grave somewhere. He's a good friend. Also, the first independent store owner I know who's suing Marvel. Talk about David and Goliath!

While I appreciate you trying to get me "off the hook" like that, Brian, the answer is not that simple – hinging as it does on your assumption that I "feel" one way (and that that "way" is pre-eminent) and "think" another way "occasionally." It would be more accurate to say that part of my mind thinks one way and part thinks another way, and the part that thinks one way hasn't gotten an adequate, rational refutation of its view from the other part. "Feeling" doesn't enter into it.

❁ ❁ ❁ ❁ ❁ ❁ ❁ ❁ ❁ ❁

Dear Dave:

Since you are approaching the bicentennial, I just wanted to drop a line and give some comments and a gift. This letter is going to be overflowing with praise, so brace yourself.

First, allow me to thank you for a steady stream of thought-provoking and thoroughly entertaining stories. To watch the evolution of your style, both writing and artistically, is one of the most engrossing things going on in comics. It seems every issue that you pull off a complex transition, idea, gesture, emotion, with such originality that it puts all other storytellers to shame. Just this issue, the use of Jaka's hanging corpse as an outline for Cerebus's shock and horror as he pounds his fists into ice on Pluto. We never do see the corpse; we see the ramifications. An interesting technique since you discuss the "injury-to-the-eye" motif later this issue.

This evolution is one of the reasons I consider *Cerebus*, as a whole, one of the most important and complex artistic achievements in a medium, let alone just the field of comics. So many subtleties and brilliant uses of symbolism. Such a command of character. So many brave uses of style and technique. You are trying something very brave with *Cerebus*, and the most exciting part is that we get to watch over such a long period of time. Architecture springs to mind, but usually in the past it was the work of commission, and today's technology means that buildings are going up faster than ever.

All of that said, allow me to offer a view on *Cerebus* that I haven't heard voiced before.

After reading the entire bulk of the series, and *Reads* about three times, I have a theory. Without plunging headlong into the debate on merged permanence and Light vs. Voids, I am going to attempt to paraphrase your words. And that is that men have to do whatever they can to not let women sink their fangs into our creative energy. And while we are both thinking and feeling creatures, women's feeling overbalances their logic, which is slowly destroying our society (I know I'm being broad and general here, but this is the ultimate message I got, when you strip away everything else). The problem is, I don't think you honestly believe this. Well, at least not to this bold of a degree.

A common theme of *Cerebus* in the past has been Power, Abuse of Power, and Manipulation. Astoria manipulating Cerebus. Cerebus achieving Popehood and completely fucking with the masses. The Judge manipulating history. The creator manipulating his creation. And maybe, through the course of *Reads*, the creator manipulating the audience.

The problems with women are something every man can relate to, but one has only to read the letters column to realize the extent of frustration and bitterness rampant in the *Cerebus* readership.

I used to have a roommate who was a painter, and every so often we would get really drunk and argue about the nature of art and, ultimately, its definition. After hours of back and forth, we actually arrived at a definition that we were both very pleased with. Art is the manipulation of the audience by the artist, so it will view the world as he does. That's in terms of emotions, relationships, color, landscape, politics, everything conceivable. At least for a moment, to inflict your vision on the audience and make it believe that it is the correct one. ALL STORIES ARE TRUE.

But I think you are taking it one step further: you are manipulating the audience based on what you know about it (us). You're saying all our fears about the opposite sex are true. They'll hurt us. They'll destroy us. But you don't believe it. You wouldn't have gotten married if you did. Jaka seems like an obvious contradiction to your logic (although you did admit to others in The Real World). Besides, you must realize that emotion and logic go hand in hand. Logic is for solving problems. Emotion allows us to perceive what is a problem. Emotion propels logic, and vice versa.

Of course, there's a tremendous possibility that I'm all wrong, but it's just one man's interpretation. You said that *Cerebus* is your reaction to the women in your life (again a paraphrase — I don't feel like digging for an exact quote). Included is a book that is my reaction to one woman on my work. I lived with her for a time. I fell head over heels for her. And I got seriously fucked up by her when all was said and done. (All of this happened as the last *Reads* monthlies were coming out, incidentally.) A few months later, I was putting together this collection of my writings to give out as Christmas gifts. When I was putting it together, I realized that everything that I had written in the past two years had some piece of her in it. The title is a short description of her. Anyway, I'm just sending it along to show a different influence the muse has had on the creator.

Jon Vinson
805 Frankfort
Huntington Beach, CA 92648

Sorry to burst your bubble, but I think "emotion propels logic and vice versa" is about as neat an encapsulation of what's wrong with the world as could be imagined -- its equal in malignancy (to me) would be Oscar Wilde's assertion that he was going to "cure the soul with the senses and vice versa" (I'm paraphrasing). Emotion, to me, is like a smoke alarm which notifies the reasoning part of the brain that something needs to be fixed. There's a wide gulf, to me, between signaling logic and propelling logic.

❄ ❄ ❄ ❄ ❄ ❄ ❄ ❄ ❄ ❄

Dear Dave:

Did you know that milk is actually a food? I didn't know that until just recently. It's pretty interesting. Here's a joke for you. What do you get when you put a cow on a gyrator? A milkshake. That's what I call a bad milk joke.

I've been having trouble with meat lately, and, subsequently, the meals I've thrown at my housemates have been a bit bogus. But let me give you a tip. When you're down doing your shopping, stock up on meat. You really can't get enough of it because when you have someone coming over for dinner and they ask, "Where's the meat?" and you don't have any, you have to go down to the shops, but you don't have enough money. I know the mistakes that I've made with meat in the past, and I don't want to make those mistakes again.

I don't really know why I'm writing to you, but I love *Cerebus*, so why not? I've taken up the task of reading the series in order, and as I write this, I'm up to issue 181 and progressing at an average rate of three issues a week, so I should be up to date fairly soon. What really pisses me off, though, is buying a new issue of *Cerebus* from my local comics shop and not being able to read it. Be sure that when I get there, I'm going to celebrate with a big bottle of Guinness. Here's to the future.

Yours truly,

Brad Weir
27 Harkins St.
Westminster
Perth, Australia

Well, I certainly have SOME money, so I'm off down to the shops in order to purchase some meat and thereby avoid the social stigma attached to the question you've quoted so eloquently in your letter. And might I suggest TWO big bottles of Guinness? In keeping with the Oxford Dictionary (1991 revised edition) definition of "celebration," of course.

❄ ❄ ❄ ❄ ❄ ❄ ❄ ❄ ❄ ❄

Dear Dave:

I just read *Superman* #203 (1967) and was delighted to see your letter printed. I ask earnestly (not facetiously!) if it's your first published "work." No journal article, newspaper article, or any other "fifteen minutes of fame" has ever thrilled me as much as (1) getting a letter published in a recent mediocre Batman story and (2) getting a signed *Cerebus*. (You were a gentleman. I couldn't see *any* evidence of a monstrous, infant-eating, misogynist satyr.)

I was hoping you could share with your readers what you felt, if you've not already done so, joining the Guy H. Lillians III and Marty Pasko fraternity in the DC Loc'ers of '67.

Best wishes,

Antonio Di Dio
150 Great North Road
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At the time, being a mere lad of eleven summers and given that I had not learned the difference between emotion and reason or how to keep the former under control by means of the latter, I FELT fucking EXCELLENT!! It was for that very reason that holding *Cerebus* No. 203 in my hands was such a trip, as well.

Dear Dave and Ger:

Okay, both *Women* and *Reads* were wonderful, and I'm sorry I've only sent you one letter since the *Women* collection hit the stands, but I've been busy reading all of the independent stuff out there as recommended by the likes of you and Terry Moore and Mike Cohen and Eddie Campbell and David Lapham and . . . you get the picture.

There really is an abundance of excellent work out there in the self-publishing and small-press world. Almost all of it is better than the Marvel/DC brand of crap (Neil's *Sandman,* Jim's *Starman,* and Peter's *Hulk* perhaps being the only exceptions), and I see that — slowly, perhaps, but surely, just the same — the comic-book audiences out here are beginning to realize that to turn our backs on the brave new worlds offered by all of the trade's self-publishers would be akin to us taking on the role of the doomed French garrison at Dien Bien Phu.

I don't rightly know what it is about *Cerebus,* Dave, but I continuously find myself returning to your vision as the Bible to be followed by all aspiring sequential artists. Maybe it was *Reads* that convinced me. After all, every word was true. Fuck the critics, Dave. Every fucking word was true. The battle still rages, and your preface dedication at the commencement of *Women* comes back to me now: "to the gender opposite as the chasm widens . . . "

Poetry always has been rooted in fundamental truth.

Mothers & Daughters is one of those instances when a body can be drifting through his own mind, not exactly paying full attention to the suddenly blurring words and pictures on the page and, just when he least expects it, be hit square between the eyes with so profound a statement that he is forced to re-examine a certain aspect of his philosophy or maybe just some painful morsel-memory of his life. Off the top of my head, the only other creator in comics — right now — who can do that to me is Adrian Tomine, writer/artist of *Optic Nerve.* Perhaps it's just that we're the same age and that I attend UC, but then again maybe that isn't all it is. Perhaps the both of you are just prophets, for lack of a better term.

I'd like to add *Concrete*'s Paul Chadwick to the list above. Quite a few of his stories have moved me in peculiar ways as well, and I know he'll be as much an influence on my future work as a creator as you will be, Dave.

Well, perhaps not *quite* as much. This is your lettercol, after all.

Finished #200 this morning. I thought this was a great issue, and yet I couldn't tell you why if I had forever and a day to do it. Maybe it was the "understanding" reached between creator and aardvark. Or, better, perhaps it was the all-too-infrequent smile on Cerebus' face. It was the first of the non-malicious variety I've seen on our hero in a devil of a long time. Anyway, the story didn't stall for me, as I unfailingly fear with every large-whole-numbered issue of every series I read. Great segue into *Guys* , Dave. I cannot wait for 201.

As it happens, I've been writing a bit of my own comic, a 1000-pager called *Inner Creeds,* for about two years now, and I'm almost satisfied with the second installment. Up 'til now, I've not mentioned it to anyone but my girlfriend, and she is the only one to actually read any of it besides myself.

Interlude: Don't think I was kissin' ass above just because I have a girl at present. I *still* think — *think!* — that everything in *Reads* is right on. Emilie has read the text pieces in *Reads* very carefully. I've watched her reading the copy I bought especially for her as a birthday present when she didn't realize I was watching. She grumps to herself occasionally, but for the most part she looks resigned to her fate as a "feeler first" rather than a "thinker first."

As an aside, she only reads three other comics: Drew's *Poison Elves,* Neil's *Sandman,* and Eddie's *Bacchus.* She doesn't get *Bacchus* yet, but she's starting to come around. She even bought the first round the last time we went clubbing.

Back to Emilie reading *Reads.* I've come to recognize some of her facial quirks and looks, and the ones she employs are far-ranging. However, as I stated earlier, she sometimes appears resigned to Fate — I always capitalize on it, thinker-first or no; sorry — while other times she appears to be nodding in agreement with your opinions.

Look, all of us out here know they're not opinions, they're facts, but others just jumping aboard haven't been brainwa — er, conditioned, yet.

Sorry if that wasn't funny. But never apologize, right?

Speaking of being funny . . . wonderful "crossover" with Eddie and motherfucking hilarious appearance in *Bacchus* 3. Jesus! I laughed so fucking hard I almost went catatonic. Do it again. Please. And soon.

Emilie loved *Bacchus* 3. There is hope, *mein freunden.*

What I was getting to above was a question. It's a question I'd desperately like you to answer in print, even if you don't put this whole LoC in the lettercol.

Dave, do you think that it's wise for a male who sees the female group mind/society/monster devouring

our future to try and change somebody who is female and doesn't see things as clearly because of her gender? No, wait. Not change somebody, but persuade her to think about the alternatives to today's world and the way things were in the past before women took the scissors and clipped our balls, castrating — perhaps — the future of a thinking, rational society?

Is it wise? Did you do it with Denise? If so, how much worse did it make things? And — gulp — should I look forward to getting my toothbrush and razor out of Emilie's apartment?

Making somebody aware of truth shouldn't be such a burden, don't you think? I'm sure everybody has his or her views on this topic — or one very much similar to it — but what do you think about it?

C'mon. You can tell me.

We're guys.

Like on "Home Improvement."

Except, of course, Tim is always the putz on that show. Damn, what a clusterfuck this world has become. Maybe it's our duty to change it. Like *giri*, or *bushido*, or something along those lines. Oh, and here's a term I just coined. I'll be writing soon with my whole theory outlined in detail. Hope you like it: **Rationally Based Emotional Response.**

Is there such a thing, Dave? Your thoughts, please. Incidentally, keep running the previews. So far, I've enjoyed *Hilly Rose* (I'm a huge B.C. Boyer fan), *Kiss and Tell* (great stuff!), and M'Oak's *Thieves and Kings*.

That last book should outsell *Bone* for fantastic pleasure alone. Thanks again.

This sonuvabitch got kinda long, didn't it? Well, guess what . . . it's over now.

L8ER.

Best,

Mark E. Roberts
14915 Sabine Drive
La Mirada, CA 90638

P.S. Emilie says thanks for Joanne. Go figure. Peace.

Jeez, and you're from California, too. Unbelievable. The problem is not dissimilar to the one faced by anyone who writes and draws. We're not better; we're different. I don't make my decisions based on emotion, but that doesn't mean that an individual doesn't have the inalienable right to make his or her decisions based on emotion. I find I can talk to women who understand the distinction, and I can't talk to women who don't understand the distinction. When I was with Deni I was a textbook case of the emotion-ravaged feminist male, so I have no idea what the reaction would have been if my reason had been in charge and in control of my emotions. "Rationally based emotional response" seems suspect to me (see smoke-alarm metaphor above). I think what you might be talking about is the combination of focused intensity and "stalematedness" when you're trying to get a rational point across to individuals who are clearly emotion-based. You keep trying to walk them through a logical sequence of ideas, and they keep interjecting with non sequiturs. "Why are you so angry?" is usually the point where you should disengage. I disengage LONG before that these days. Life's too short.

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Dear Dave:

Well it's finally upon us, our 10-year anniversary. I bet you didn't even know that it's been that long since you, Gerhard, and I met. Actually Cerebus and I met, but it's close enough. I was originally writing to you on my 100-issue anniversary of collecting *Cerebus*, which would have been back at issue 187. I had the letter all written and ready to send but never got around to sending it until it was too late. Back then, Aardvark Comment was in the middle of the Man vs. Womyn, feminist, I hate my ex-girlfriend, etc. debate. I was going to throw in my two cents' worth, which amounted to: "Well, I'm glad I'm gay, so I never have to worry about all that woman shit, because I actually understand them more than I understand the typical straight male." Well, it's been over a year now and not much has changed. It's weird thinking that we've been together for 10 years this June. *Cerebus* has been the only constant in my life for that long of a period of time. Every month, or so, it came out and provided me with a 20+-minute escape from whatever was troubling me at the time. I just wanted to write and say thanks, Dave, for being there every month, no matter what I was going through. Thanks also for having the previews and getting me into a number of other excellent self-published comics. I've always said my friends are the most important people in my life, and you have been one and you never even knew it. So thanks for bringing a spot of joy every month for the last 10 years, and I look forward to spending the next eight years together. Take care!

Geoffrey Cuddy
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Okay — just don't tell my girlfriend, man. Renewal is coming up again at the end of June.

EIGHTY-EIGHT PAGE PARTY PACK
REPRINTING CEREBUS 201~204

SHIPPING IN SEPTEMBER